

SAGA OF THE CHIPPED BLADE

By Stephen L. Poole

Version 130515

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

TORAMON SABURO MASTER SWORDSMAN AT EDO CASTLE

YOSHIDA MINOR SAMURAI AT EDO CASTLE

ORIN CORTESAN AT YOSHIWARA

CRIER YOSHIWARA, TRIAL, TIME DRUM, KABUKI

MASTER YOSHIWARA HOUSE MASTER

UCHIDA WOODBLOCK ARTIST

CHIKUMON KINSAI KABUKI PLAYWRIGHT

OLD WOMAN NOSEY NEIGHBOR OF KINSAI

LORD SENDAI HIGH OFFICAL FOR THE SHOGUN

LORD KURODA HIGH OFFICAL FOR THE SHOGUN

FUKUDA SHIRO SAMURAI IN CHARGE OF PRISONERS

GO-KEN FAMOUS BRIGAND

VARIOUS – YOSHIWARA MAIDS, CUSTOMERS, SAMURAI GUARDS, BRIGANDS, KABUKI CROWD

ANNOUNCER The American Radio Theater is pleased to bring you “The Saga of the Chipped Blade”, an original radio play by Stephen L. Poole. The play takes place in old Japan, during the age of the samurai. The Japan of wood block prints, geisha, courtesans and kabuki. So please sit back, have some *sake* and enjoy “The Saga of the Chipped Blade”.

ACT ISCENE 1 THE YOSHIWARA PLEASURE DISTRICT OF OLD EDO

1 NARRATOR *Minna sama, irrashaimase!* Welcome! Tonight we invite you to join us on an adventure
2 in Old Japan. The Japan of the samurai, when Tokyo was called Edo and the Shoguns
3 ruled from Edo Castle, the largest fortress in the world. At the time our story takes
4 place Japan has been at peace for over 200 years, isolated by decree from the rest of
5 the world. Without wars to fight, the warrior samurai turned into officious bureaucrats.
6 And without wars to flee, the common people of Japan turned to ... entertainment. The
7 arts flourished. There were more books stores in Edo than any city in Europe. Elaborate
8 costume plays, called *kabuki*, were all the rage. Just like today's movie fans, Japanese
9 collected posters of their favorite kabuki actors. Artists produced wood block prints,
10 known as *ukiyoo e*, depicting the beautiful geisha and courtesans of the Pleasure
11 Districts, called in Japanese the *U-ki-yoo*, the Floating World. And the biggest pleasure
12 district in Japan was the famous Yoshiwara on the outskirts of Edo.

13 Our play opens just as the gates of Yoshiwara are opening for another night of...
14 entertainment.

15 CRIER (BANGING GONG) Yoshiwara is open! Yoshiwara is noooow open!

16 SFX SOUNDS OF SHAMISEN, QUICK SHUFFLING FEET, HAPPY CHATTER, MIXED VOICES

17 VOICES (MEN TOUTS) *Irrashai!* Welcome! Please come in here. Best house in Yoshiwara! Come in
18 here to see the famous beauty Lady Wisteria!

19 VOICES (MEN CUSTOMERS) Look at that one! What a beauty! Ah, don't waste your money on her.
20 There are better girls down the road.

21 VOICES (WOMEN) Hey good looking! Want to have some fun tonight? Why in such a
22 hurry...Creep!

23 MASTER Ah, Lord Yoshida! Welcome, sir! Welcome back to Inn of the Fox Goddess.

24 YOSHIDA Unh. Where is Orin tonight?

25 MASTER I will bring her to you right away, sir. (TO MAID) Kiku! Bring some sake for Lord Yoshida.

26 YOSHIDA Now, I told you before don't call me "Lord" in Yoshiwara. To you I am just MISTER
27 Yoshida.

28 MASTER Of course, sir. My apologies. Please wait in here.

29 SFX SOUND OF SLIDING DOOR

30 MASTER Orin-san will be with you shortly.

31 SFX SOUND OF SLIDING DOOR

32 SFX FOOTSTEPS ON THE HALLWAY

1 MASTER Ah, Orin. Room eight.

2 ORIN (BORED) Who is it?

3 MASTER That jerk Yoshida. Treat him like a lord, but make sure he pays. No credit for samurai!

4 ORIN Got it.

5 SFX SOUND OF SLIDING DOOR

6 ORIN (USING HER COURTESAN VOICE) Ah, Lord Yoshida! I am so happy to see you again! My body
7 was aching for your touch! (CRYING) Please don't be so cruel to me.

8 YOSHIDA Yeah, yeah. Just pour me some sake.

9 SFX POURING SAKE.

10 YOSHIDA (SIPPING SAKE) Ah, that's better. I needed that...after the mess today. I mean, how
11 could anyone be so careless?

12 ORIN Here, let me refill your cup. Some difficulty at the castle today?

13 YOSHIDA (GETTING DRUNK) Difficulty? Difficulty is when the Shogun's cat gets caught in a tree.
14 Today was an outright disaster! Ha! But he had it coming to him!

15 ORIN (SARCASTIC) You know the Shogun's cat? I didn't realize that Lord Yoshida has such an
16 exalted rank!

17 YOSHIDA (DRUNK) Remember, don't call me "Lord". Samurai *aren't* supposed to be in Yoshiwara,
18 right? Juz call me "Shur, Sir Yoshida".

19 ORIN As you wish, sir. Your humble servant obeys. Now what was so terrible as to trouble Sir
20 Yoshida today?

21 YOSHIDA Ha! He had it coming to him. With his airs, and...and his "lin-e-age". I hope I can be
22 there when he slits his belly. Hey, my cup is empty!

23 ORIN *Gomen!* Let me fill it.

24 YOSHIDA Thas better. Couldn't happen...to a better...

25 ORIN (GETTING EXASPERATED) WHAT happened???

26 YOSHIDA Huh? Oh, the sword testing. Thas all.

27 ORIN What is a sword testing?

28 YOSHIDA Don't you know anything? It's how we test the sharpness of a sword. The SHOGUN'S
29 sword!

1 ORIN Oh, my! And how do you do that, Sir Yoshida?

2 YOSHIDA You really don't know anything, do you - dumb woman. Well, I'll tell you how. First you
3 take a prisoner – you know, a criminal – and ya tie him between two posts. Then ya
4 take the sword and - SWISH! Ya cut him in half!

5 ORIN Oh, how dreadful! You must be a powerful swordsman, Sir Yoshida, to be able to cut a
6 man in half with one stroke!

7 YOSHIDA Huh? Oh, I didn't do the... the...SWISHING. I don't dirty my hands on common criminals.
8 HE did it, and he made a right mess of it. Botched it! Can you believe...can you believe
9 this? He managed to CHIP the sword. He chipped the Shogun's sword! A sword over a
10 THOUSAND years old, ruined! (HAPPILY) Best thing that ever happened! (COLDLY) And
11 now he is going to pay for it.

12 ORIN Who is? Who is going to pay?

13 YOSHIDA Why, the guy doing the cutting, of course. The SWISHER! (LAUGHS AT HIS OWN JOKE).

14 ORIN (REALLY PRYING) Yes, but who was it? What was his name?

15 YOSHIDA (GETTING DEFENSIVE) Huh? Oh, some minor samurai. Some nobody named "Tora" something.

16 ORIN (SURPRISED) TORAMON SABURO !?!

17 YOSHIDA (PEEVED) Uh, yeah, I guess that's his name. Wha... you know him?

18 ORIN [EXCITED, AND USING HER NORMAL VOICE] Toramon Saburo? Everyone knows about him! He
19 rescued that kidnapped merchant's daughter and refused any reward. He had to kill ten
20 kidnappers single handed to get to her.

21 YOSHIDA Yeah, yeah...

22 ORIN Then the notorious Hanafuda Gang put a price on HIS head, and he was challenged to a
23 duel by the legendary Go-ken. But when Toramon arrived for the duel, Go-ken had
24 surrounded the road with 50 of his henchmen, and Toramon had to slice his way...

25 YOSHIDA (ANGRY) Yeah, yeah, yeah! Or so they say. 50 henchmen, 100. It's all lies! Nobody can fight
26 like that since the days of Benkei and Musashi! If all you are going to do is spread lies, I
27 am out of here! I can find more peaceful – quiet! – company in some other dump!
28 Wherez the toilet?

29 SFX SLIDDING DOOR, STOMPING FEET

30 MASTER Is the gentleman leaving so early? I hope everything was to your satisfaction. If you
31 would like to settle your bill now...

1 YOSHIDA Huh, you think I'm a poor shamu...samurai who can't pay his bill? Here, you old badger!

2 SFX COINS TOSSED ON THE GROUND

3 YOSHIDA I am a Yoshida – LORD Yoshida to you! – and I don't stoop to dirty my hands with...uh...
4 Hey, where's that toilet!?!

5 SFX FEET STAMP OFF

6 MASTER Fare thee well, Lord Jerk Face!

7 ORIN Sorry, master. He got steamed about something.

8 MASTER Good riddance. We don't need his kind. Hey, he dropped quite a load of coins here.
9 You've earned a night off, Orin.

10 ORIN Thank you, master!

11 MASTER Why don't you go relax in room 20. There is a certain gentleman there hoping to see
12 you.

13 ORIN (HAPPILY) Is it Uchida-san?

14 MASTER Lucky guess! Go on, have some fun.

15 SFX SHAMISEN MUSIC, DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES

16 ORIN And how is the poor, struggling artist tonight?

17 UCHIDA Lady Orin! Oh, how happy to see you! What beauty! Please, sit there and let me draw
18 you.

19 ORIN You flatter me. You really think I am ...beautiful?

20 UCHIDA (SCRIBBLING) Huh? Oh, do you have your pipe? I'm drawing all the girls with their pipes.

21 ORIN (CALLING TO MAIDS) Cherry, Plum!

22 MAIDS (LITTLE GIRLS VOICES) Hai!

23 ORIN Fetch my pipe and some sake. Hurry now!

24 MAIDS Hai!

25 ORIN Drawing ALL the girls, huh? (SARCASTIC) That sounds like a labor of love.

26 UCHIDA It's the latest fad. Girls with their pipes. All the wood block print shops are selling out. I
27 suppose there is something erotic about a girl smoking a pipe, but I don't have a sense
28 for that sort of thing.

1 ORIN (TENDERLY) And what do you have a sense for, Uchida-san.

2 UCHIDA Beauty. Inner beauty. Like you Orin-san. You have a rare combination of both inner
3 and outer beauty that a poor artist like me struggles to capture.

4 ORIN (TOUCHED) Awww... You really think I..

5 SFX DOOR SLIDES OPEN WITH A SLAM

6 CHERRY Here is your pipe ma'am!

7 PLUM And your sake!

8 ORIN (ANNOYED) Thank you for the interruption, girls. Now go somewhere else!

9 MAIDS (CHEERFULLY) Hai!

10 SFX DOOR SLIDES CLOSED

11 SFX SOUND OF SAKE POURING

12 UCHIDA *Arigatoo!* Thank you for the sake. Now sit like this. And hold the pipe like this. Good!
13 Now, tilt your head down and look this way.

14 ORIN Like this?

15 UCHIDA What eyes! I don't have ink black enough to capture their depth! Please, don't look too
16 hard. My brush is going to catch fire.

17 ORIN (SULTRY) What about the rest of you?

18 UCHIDA I caught fire the moment you walked into the room.

19 ORIN Awww... Come here!

20 SFX SOUND OF DROPPED BRUSH, SHUFFLED PAPERS, SPILLED SAKE, LOUD KISSING
21 DROWNED OUT BY SHAMISEN MUSIC.

22 ACT I

23 SCENE 2 AT THE HOUSE OF CHIKUMON KINSAI, THE KABUKI PLAYWRIGHT, LATER THAT NIGHT

24 NARRATOR Let's give our loving couple some privacy, shall we? We pick up the story a few hours
25 later, in the crowded tenements of Edo, where the struggling artist Uchida pays a late
26 night call on his friend, a struggling kabuki playwright named Kinsai.

27 SFX SOUND OF KNOCKING

28 UCHIDA Kinsai! Hey, Kin-chan, open up! It's me, Uchida!

1 SFX SOUND OF KNOCKING

2 KINSAI Go away. I'm not here.

3 UCHIDA C'mon. It's me, Uchida. I know you're in there – your candle is lit. (TEMPTINGLY) Got
4 some nice pictures for you.

5 KINSAI Any plump ones? You know I like the plump ones.

6 UCHIDA There as plump as persimmons. Now open up!

7 SFX DOOR UNBOLTING SLIDING, UCHIDA ENTERING

8 KINSAI Have a seat.

9 UCHIDA There is nowhere TO sit. This place is a mess!

10 SFX SHUFFLING PAPERS

11 KINSAI Let me move some of my yet unfinished kabuki masterpieces out of the way. There. Sit
12 down. What time is it anyway?

13 UCHIDA About three in the morning. I just came from Yoshiwara.

14 KINSAI Yoshiwara? But they locked the gates hours ago. How'd you get out?

15 UCHIDA Had to bribe that gatekeeper Baba-san with some drawings.

16 KINSAI (WORRIED) Not the plump ones?

17 UCHIDA Nah, he's more of a "neck" man. Here, feast your eyes on these.

18 KINSAI Nice, very nice. Oooo, this one is going over my futon. But you didn't come here at 3 in
19 the morning just to show me your dirty pictures.

20 UCHIDA Well, uh.

21 KINSAI C'mon. Spill it.

22 UCHIDA (NONCHALANT) You working on any kabuki plays?

23 KINSAI Working? I've got kabuki coming out of my ears! There's not enough paper in Edo to
24 contain all the plays I'm working on!

25 SFX SOUNDS OF UNFOLDING CRUMPLED PAPER

26 KINSAI Here's "The Saga of Lost Scroll of the Taira" – a work in progress. And there's "The Five
27 Brothers of Soga" - in concept stage as of now. Oh, yes, "Goemon the Thief, Part Seven"
28 – too bad I never could finish the first six parts! See, lots of work! All rubbish!

1 SFX SOUND OF TOSSED PAPERS

2 OLD WOMAN (SHOUTING THROUGH WALL) Hey! Pipe down in there! My family is trying to sleep!

3 KINSAI Ah, shut up you old hag! Go back to your flea eaten bed! Alright, Uchida-kun. You've
4 got me mad now. You better have something good or I'm going to burn this dump
5 down!

6 UCHIDA Calm down, calm down. I heard something tonight that may interest you. But I want in
7 on doing the kabuki posters if it takes off.

8 KINSAI (DISAPPOINTED) Hmmp! You're more of a ladies' man. Go see Chiemon, he does all the "lovey-
9 dovey" stuff. I am Chikumon Kinsai! I'm strictly a Manly-Man kabuki writer!

10 UCHIDA Oh, I see. Too bad. I thought you might be interested in something about a sword,
11 that's all. Well, I'll be going home then...

12 KINSAI *Chotto matte!* Wait a second! Alright, you have my attention. What sword?

13 UCHIDA The Shogun's sword. Thousands of years old.

14 KINSAI What about it?

15 UCHIDA It got broken.

16 KINSAI Interesting, interesting. How?

17 UCHIDA During a sword testing.

18 KINSAI What's a sword testing?

19 UCHIDA Don't you know anything? It's where you test the sharpness of a sword by tying a guy
20 between two posts and – SWISH! You cut him in half!

21 KINSAI Sounds messy. But I think special effects can handle it. We're going to need lots of red
22 silk cloth...

23 UCHIDA You're missing the point!

24 KINSAI The point being....?

25 UCHIDA When the guy goes to SWISH, instead he gets KRACK!

26 KINSAI KRACK! As in... a broken sword?

27 UCHIDA Right! Well, it was more of a chipped sword than a broken sword.

28 KINSAI (BRIGHTLY) I like it! Chipped sounds more poetic than broken... and implies the sword can
29 still be used. Although... although... yes! The chip imparts a stigma to the blade... that

1 will forever haunt the one who wields the CHIPPED SWORD! Good, good! By the way,
2 what happened to the guy?

3 UCHIDA Which guy? The guy between the two posts or the guy with the sword?

4 KINSAI Well, if I based my play on the guy between the two posts, it would be, perhaps... a little
5 short? Perhaps...curtailed? Only... half a kabuki? Of course I mean the guy holding the
6 sword! What's his story? What's his career?

7 UCHIDA Are you ready for this?

8 KINSAI Wait. Let me get some paper and ink. There. (SPEAKING THEATRICALY WHILE HE
9 WRITES) "The mist of dawn rise silently over the execution grounds of Edo Castle.
10 Between two posts proudly stands the notorious brigand Goemon, his hands bound
11 tightly, but his spirit unfettered."

12 UCHIDA Hey, that's pretty good.

13 KINSAI Drivel. "As the sun pierces through the gloom, it glitters off the famous sword ...uh, let's
14 call it...*Oni-no-Kiri*, the Demon Slicer.."

15 UCHIDA "Which had been lost in the waves at the great sea battle of Dan-no-ura.."

16 KINSAI Shut up! I do the poetry, you do the posters. But that's pretty good..."Which had been
17 lost in the waves at the great sea battle of Dan-no-ura... and now was in the hands of
18 the most powerful swordsman in Japan."... Whose name is...? ...Whose name is?...

19 UCHIDA Toramon Saburo.

20 KINSAI Toramon Saburo!!

21 OLD WOMAN (THROUGH THE WALL) Toramon Saburo!!

22 KINSAI Shut up, you old witch! Quit listening to my plays! (TO UCHIDA) THE Toramon Saburo?
23 This is big! Are you sure about this, Uchida-kun?

24 UCHIDA I'm sure. Straight from the courtesan's mouth. Toramon Saburo.

25 ACT II

26 SCENE ONE EDO CASTLE, COURT OF INQUIRES

27 NARRATOR It seems like this Toramon Saburo is quite well known. But perhaps for all the wrong
28 reasons. Although Sir Toramon has faced death in duels many times, today he is facing
29 his greatest challenge. The Shogun's Court of Inquiry! Was Toramon really responsible
30 for chipping the sword of the Shogun? If so, he is in serious danger with no path to
31 escape. Let's listen in...

1 CRIER Court of Inquires for Edo Castle now in session. Lord Sendai and Lord Kuroda presiding.
2 Calling our first witness, Sir Toramon Saburo. Toramon Saburo!

3 TORAMON Hai!

4 CRIER Approach the court.

5 TORAMON Hai!

6 SFX SOUND OF SHUFFLING SILK

7 CRIER State your name and rank for the court records.

8 TORAMON Hai. My name is Toramon Saburo. I am a Master swordsman of the Chikuho Style of
9 fencing, and am currently assigned to the Ministry of Weapons at the Yasukuni Armory,
10 Edo Castle.

11 KURODA I am Kuroda. Minister of Inquires to the Shogun. Face me.

12 TORAMON Hai.

13 KURODA Sir Toramon, do you recognize the sword in front of you?

14 TORAMON Hai.

15 KURODA Well, do you see anything... special... about this sword?

16 TORAMON Hai.

17 KURODA Well, what do you see that is special about this sword?

18 TORAMON Hai. The sword is made in the Hira-zukuri style. Very special.

19 KURODA Yes, I know what style it is! Can you see anything...unusual...about this sword?

20 TORAMON Hai.

21 KURODA Well.... What do you see???

22 TORAMON Hai. There is a very unusual zigzag pattern on the blade that resembles a lightning bolt.
23 I believe this pattern is called "*Inazuma*".

24 KURODA Yes, we know all about the pattern on the blade! It's the blade itself...

25 SENDAI (CALMLY) Excuse me, Lord Kuroda. If I may. (TO TORAMON). I am Sendai, Minister for
26 Inventories of Precious Items. I was a close friend of your father, Sir Toramon. Now,
27 please draw your attention to the very point of the sword, the *kissaki*. As you know
28 from your experience - which I am sure was passed down to you by your father - the

1 value of a sword is greatly determined by the condition of this point, the *kissaki*. Please
2 examine the *kissaki* and tell me if there is any defect.

3 TORAMON Hai. The *kissaki* has a small nick just in front of the joint line to center blade.

4 KURODA See! He admits it! Now, tell me what the value of this sword is, Sir Toramon!

5 TORAMON The sword has no value, sir.

6 KURODA What do you mean “no value”? This is an ancient sword that belonged to Lord Oda
7 himself, among others. How dare you say it has no value!

8 TORAMON Excuse my choice of words, sir. I was trying to say this sword is beyond value. It is
9 “valueless”.

10 KURODA Of course it is valueless! And you destroyed it. Now it has no value! It is...value-
11 less?...what am I saying!

12 SENDAI Sir Toramon, do you know how the tip of the sword was chipped?

13 TORAMON Hai. It happened during an execu... I’m sorry, I mean during a sword testing.

14 SENDAI Sir Toramon, tell us in your own words the events that caused this sword to be damaged.
15 Please sit relaxed and take your time.

16 TORAMON Thank you my lord. A week ago I was summoned by Lord Sendai to examine an ancient
17 sword found in the Ministry of Precious Items. I arrived at Lord Sendai office..... (VOICE
18 FADES)

19 ACT II

20 SCENE TWO ONE WEEK PREVIOUS AT LORD SENDAI’S OFFICE IN EDO CASTLE

21 NARRATOR We shall leave the court of inquiry for a moment, and journey back to listen in on the
22 meeting between Toramon and Lord Sendai. As you will see, this meeting concerns a
23 mysterious sword, discovered in the vaults of Edo Castle. Here we are, one week
24 previous at Lord Sendai’s office in Ministry of Precious Items.

25 TORAMON *Moshiagemasu!* Reporting as ordered!

26 SENDAI Ah, Sir Toramon! Come in, come in! Please have a seat here.

27 TORAMON Thank you, Lord Sendai, for your support and patronage.

28 SENDAI No formalities now. I’ve known you since you were a screaming baby. How is your
29 sister, Nobuko?

30 TORAMON Very well, my lord. See looks after me now like a mother.

1 SENDAI Ah, yes. I am sorry her marriage didn't work out. Perhaps I can find a suitable match for
2 her soon.

3 TORAMON Thank you for your support to my family, sir.

4 SENDAI Not at all, not at all. Your father and I were very close – it's the least I can do to pay
5 homage to his memory.

6 TORAMON Thank you, sir.

7 SENDAI Now, Saburo. I have something interesting to show you. Open that sword case over
8 there.

9 TORAMON Ahhh, beautiful scabbard. Light as a feather! ...May ..I..?

10 SENDAI Yes, yes! Take it out and examine the blade. I want to see how much you tell me about
11 this sword.

12 TORAMON Oh no, now I feel like a schoolboy at his first exam. Let's see... (REMOVING SWORD
13 FROM SCABBARD). Oh... magnificent!

14 SENDAI Well, what can you tell me?

15 TORAMON Excuse my ignorance. I wish my father was here to correct me. First I would say that
16 this is a Hira-zukuri style blade, of which very few have ever been made. More than two
17 shaku long, but very light to hold. Perfect balance. (ADMIRING THE BLADE) Ahhh, there
18 is a beautiful zigzag pattern on the blade that resembles a lightning bolt, a kind of
19 pattern called an *Inazuma*.

20 SENDAI Very good, very good, Saburo-san! Your father taught you well.

21 TORAMON Thank you, sir. And... examining the cutting edge it seems...

22 SENDAI Yes?

23 TORAMON (SURPRISED) It seems that this sword has never been used! It looks as new as the
24 day it was first polished. It looks like it has never been RE – polished!

25 SENDAI Excellent! Now remove the hilt and look at the tang.

26 SFX SOME LIGHT KNOCKING AS THE HILT IS REMOVED

27 TORAMON (READING THE INSCRIPTION ON THE TANG) MI-NO KEN....TA-CHI-BA-NA KAN...

28 "Tachibana Kansuke!" Unbelievable! Sir, this sword is extremely rare!

29 SENDAI Well done, Saburo! As far as my best appraisers in Ministry of Precious Items can
30 determine, this is one of the few – maybe the only – remaining sword made by the

1 legendary Tachibana Kansuke in Mino Provence. That would mean it was made in the
2 Muromachi Period, at the time of the Ashikaga Shoguns and is at least three hundred
3 years old.

4 TORAMON But it looks brand new! Any chance that...

5 SENDAI No, no. No chance of a forgery. I found it quite by accident in the storehouse while
6 doing an inventory. I thought it might be a copy of an older sword, but it was that
7 lightning bolt pattern that made me curious. Looking through some dusty old archives I
8 found a short entry that Lord Oda himself took possession of a rare sword called the
9 "*Inabikari*", the "Lightning Flash" when he conquered Mino Provence. Could this be the
10 same sword, I wondered?

11 TORAMON Impossible.

12 SENDAI You think so, Saburo? Well, I have learned that "precious items" have a way of leaving
13 their dusty footprints through history. Hideyoshi, who succeeded Oda, also listed a
14 sword called *Inabikari*. It was believed to have been lost when Osaka Castle was
15 destroyed, but then in the annals of the Great Tokugawa there is a tempting entry
16 saying "many precious items rescued from Osaka Castle before the battle, including a
17 Lightning Sword". When the Tokugawa clan became Shogun, it must have found its
18 way here to Edo Castle along with the other "precious items" and has been sitting in our
19 vaults every since.

20 TORAMON Sir, I can never thank you enough for giving me the pleasure of holding such a rare
21 treasure.

22 SENDAI Please, Saburo. There is more to this story. Some bad history to come.

23 TORAMON What is it, sir?

24 SENDAI Saburo, I am a foolish, vain old monkey. Your father would be beating me with his fan
25 for what I did.

26 TORAMON What happened?

27 SENDAI I was so proud of myself to find such a rare sword in our possession... that I brought it to
28 the attention of the Shogun.

29 TORAMON He must have been overjoyed.

30 SENDAI Saburo, the Shoguns of old would have recognized this sword as a precious reminder of
31 our warring past. A perfectly crafted sword that survived hundreds of years of warfare –
32 without ever being used. The Old Shoguns would have placed this sword in special care,
33 maybe even dedicated it to the War God, Hachiman. That's what I thought when I
34 presented the sword to the current Shogun. I was stupid! He is just a boy...

1 TORAMON Sir...?

2 SENDAI He looked at the sword and said "Never been used? Well, then let's use it."

3 TORAMON Sir, we can't!

4 SENDAI He insists. That is why I called for you, Saburo. You are our best swordsman. You can
5 do this test, get it over with and we can store the sword away again for future
6 generations.

7 TORAMON Sir, I am humbled by this request. If you wish I can make a dummy out of straw mats
8 and slice it in half. A blade this sharp will have no trouble cutting through many layers
9 of straw, but we will need to polish it immediately after...

10 SENDAI Saburo, Saburo.

11 TORAMON Yes, sir?

12 SENDAI The Shogun wants to use it on a living person.

13 PAUSE FOR EFFECT

14 TORAMON Sir, we can't! I can't!

15 SENDAI Saburo, please...

16 TORAMON Sir, get a corpse from the execution grounds. Assign some untouchable person to do
17 the testing.

18 SENDAI Saburo, Saburo... the Shogun wants to see real blood.

19 TORAMON Sir, it's just that I can't... I've killed many men face to face, in duels, when they can fight
20 back. But to kill someone just to test a sword... I am not an executioner!

21 SENDAI (STERN) Sir Toramon! You have no choice in this matter! It is an order from the Shogun
22 himself! If we refuse his order, I will be forced to kill myself – to slit my belly in hara-kiri!
23 I will take full responsibility for any failure to carry out the Shogun's order. I will try to
24 protect you and you sister, but...

25 TORAMON Lord Sendai, forgive me! I don't mean to put you in such a precarious position. It's
26 just... why choose me, sir?

27 SENDAI As I said – you are our best swordsman. I would not trust this sword in the hands of
28 anyone else. Just think of this as a ... a testing. Do it quickly and make sure the sword
29 isn't damaged. Then we can clean it, polish it and preserve it. Understood?

30 TORAMON (RESIGNED) Hai!... I understand.

- 1 SENDAI Good. Now I will write you out an order to appear at the Sakura Barracks courtyard on
2 this coming Friday, at nine in the morning. To test the sword believed to be the
3 *Inabikari*. Any questions?
- 4 TORAMON No, sir. No questions.
- 5 SENDAI Come now, Saburo. Cheer up! If you do this right – and I know you will! – then you will
6 give great pleasure to the Shogun. And your star will rise! And my star will rise!
- 7 TORAMON (TO HIMSELF) And my father would die of shame if he were alive.
- 8 SENDAI What was that?
- 9 TORAMON Nothing, my lord. Friday morning, nine o'clock.
- 10 ACT II
- 11 SCENE THREE BACK AT THE COURT OF INQUIRIES
- 12 NARRATOR Now we know how Toramon first became involved with this sword, thought to be the
13 *Inabikari*, The Lightning Flash. Let us return to the Court of Inquires and listen in as
14 Toramon continues his testimony.
- 15 KURODA Just a moment, Sir Toramon! I wasn't aware you had a meeting with Lord Sendai a
16 week ago. (SUSPICIOUS) What did you discuss?
- 17 TORAMON Hai. I was instructed in my duties by Lord Sendai and I was allowed to examine the
18 sword in preparation for the testing.
- 19 KURODA Aha! You examined the sword! Did you see any... defects... on the blade at that time?
- 20 TORAMON No, my lord. The blade appeared unused and in perfect condition.
- 21 KURODA Excellent! So we have established that the blade was UNDAMAGED a week ago. And,
22 Lord Sendai, was the sword out of your possession anytime between that meeting and
23 Friday morning?
- 24 SENDAI No, it was never out of my possession. It was never even out its scabbard.
- 25 KURODA Now we are getting somewhere! We have two witnesses saying the sword was in
26 perfect condition before Friday morning. Make sure that fact is in the court record!
27 Proceed with your account, Sir Toramon.
- 28 TORAMON Hai. On Friday morning at 8 o'clock I proceeded to enter Edo Castle by the Sakura Gate.
29 Sir Yoshida was on duty as gatekeeper that morning...(VOICE FADES)
- 30 ACT II

1 SCENE FOUR EDO CASTLE SAKURA GATE, FRIDAY MORNING

2 NARRATOR Sorry for the interruption! I thought you might find it interesting to see how Edo Castle
3 starts the day. Imagine thousands of sleepy samurai flowing into the castle through its
4 many gates, heading for their offices where they will drink tea, share gossip, and count
5 and recount weapons and war supplies – that will never be used. Here we are at the
6 Sakura Gate, where Sir Yoshida is on gate duty. Remember Yoshida? We met him
7 Friday night in Yoshiwara. Let's see how he began his day on Friday morning...

8 SFX STREADILY WALKING FEET, SOUNDS OF ROUTINE MORNING GREETINGS.

9 VOICES "Good morning...*Ohaiyoo gozaimasu!*...'Morning...*Ohaiyoo*

10 YOSHIDA (BORED) Pass....Pass....Pass....Pass... Hey, wait a minute!

11 TORAMON Yes?

12 YOSHIDA Sir Toramon! What brings you here? I thought you worked with Ministry of Weapons?

13 TORAMON That is correct, Sir Yoshida.

14 YOSHIDA Well, you Weapons guys are assigned to use the Yasukuni Gate. This is the Sakura Gate,
15 in case you hadn't noticed.

16 TORAMON Yes, Sir Yoshida. I wish to use the Sakura Gate today because I am on my way to the
17 Sakura Barracks. It is only a short distance from here.

18 YOSHIDA I don't care how close the barracks are. If you need to get there you should go back
19 around to Yasukuni Gate – your assigned gate! - and proceed through the castle to
20 Sakura Barracks. Don't use me for a shortcut!

21 TORAMON Sir Yoshida, I am just a short walk from the barracks now. If I go back to Yasukuni it will
22 take me 2 to 3 hours to get back here through the castle.

23 YOSHIDA That's not my problem! You should have started out sooner...instead of sleeping in, ha!

24 TORAMON Sir Yoshida. I am sorry to inconvenience you, but I have orders to be at Sakura Barracks
25 by 9 o'clock. If you... or anyone else... hinders me you will be guilty of obstruction of a
26 direct order. I believe the penalty is instant dismissal...or was it death? Are you
27 prepared for that, Sir Yoshida?

28 YOSHIDA Orders? What orders? Let me see them.

29 TORAMON Here.

30 YOSHIDA (READING) Toramon Saburo ordered...proceed... Sakura Barrack...testing the I-NA-BI-KA-
31 RI...what the heck is that?

1 TORAMON It is not your concern, sir. Please just let me pass.

2 YOSHIDA Some kind of a sword is it? And you are going to ...”test” it. Ha, ha, ha - don’t cut
3 yourself! That sword may be sharp!

4 TORAMON Sir, if I may pass.

5 YOSHIDA Go on, get out of here. I’m too busy to worry about samurai on minor errands. Well,
6 go! What are you waiting for? I give you permission to pass.

7 TORAMON Sir, if I may have my orders back.

8 YOSHIDA Here. Whoa! This is the seal of Lord Sendai! You report to him now?

9 TORAMON (LEAVING) Thank you. Good day, sir.

10 SFX FOOTSTEPS WALKING OFF

11 YOSHIDA (TO HIMSELF) That’s right – walk away! The high and mighty Toramon doesn’t even know
12 what gate to use. But I wonder... Lord Sendai, huh... what is he up to? (TO A GUARD)
13 Hey, Guard, watch the gate for me. I’ll be right back.

14 GUARD Sir, you can’t leave the gate while on duty!

15 YOSHIDA Nature call. I’ll be right back.

16 ACT II

17 SCENE FIVE BACK AT THE COURT OF INQUIRIES

18 NARRATOR Back at the Court of Inquires, Sir Toramon has just finished telling about his encounter
19 with Sir Yoshida.

20 KURODA You say Sir Yoshida prevented you from entering the castle? For what reason?

21 TORAMON Hai. Sir Yoshida was in charge of the Sakura Gate that morning. As such, his office
22 allows him to stop and inspect anyone entering the castle. It was within his authority to
23 stop me.

24 SENDAI And you say he looked at the orders I wrote for you? That was none of his concern!

25 TORAMON Hai. As I said Sir Yoshida was charged with inspecting anyone entering the castle, and
26 your orders completely satisfied him as to my mission.

27 KURODA And then you proceeded to the Sakura Barracks, yes?

28 TORAMON Yes, my lord. But... there was something curious...

29 KURODA What was that?

1 TORAMON I saw Sir Yoshida following me for a ways. Perhaps he was just verifying that I was
2 indeed going to the barracks. I lost sight of him after I reached and entered the barracks.

3 SENDAI That is curious. I wonder what Yoshida was doing away from his post...?

4 ACT II

5 SCENE SIX EDO CASTLE, FRIDAY MORNING, NEAR SAKURA BARRACKS

6 NARRATOR Good question! We go back now to Friday morning and follow Sir Yoshida. It is a
7 serious offense to leave his post without permission. He better have a good reason!
8 Now, where did he go? Ah, there he is, wandering near the Sakura Barracks. Let's
9 follow him and see what he is up to...

10 YOSHIDA Hey, Sir Fukuda!

11 FUKUDA Sir Yoshida. I thought you were on gate duty this morning.

12 YOSHIDA Oh, I was. But they are testing a sword this morning. The "Baba-bi-raki" (GETTING THE
13 NAME WRONG). Lord SENDAI asked me to keep an eye on things.

14 FUKUDA Hm, I didn't know you were involved. Well, that's the prisoner over there.

15 YOSHIDA (UNSURE) Prisoner...?

16 FUKUDA Yes, for the testing the Shogun's sword. Sir Toramon is going to use the "*Sa-naname*"
17 cut on him. Should be pretty bloody.

18 YOSHIDA Ouch! So who is the lucky fellow?

19 FUKUDA Don't you know? That's the famous Go-ken. Toramon caught him, remember.

20 YOSHIDA Oh, right. Uh...that reminds me. Toramon asked me to check in on the, uh, prisoner to
21 see how he is holding up.

22 FUKUDA I don't know... He's been pretty quiet. Don't want him causing a scene.

23 YOSHIDA It will just take a minute. Toramon wants everything to go smoothly.

24 FUKUDA Well, make it quick. And don't upset him!

25 SFX SOUND OF CRUNCHING GRAVEL AS YOSHIDA APPROCHES GO-KEN.

26 YOSHIDA So, you are the great Go-Ken.

27 GO-KEN Who the heck are you?

28 YOSHIDA I am Yoshida. LORD Yoshida to you.

1 GO-KEN I could not care less.

2 YOSHIDA So, is it true what they say?

3 GO-KEN What do they say?

4 YOSHIDA Oh, that Toramon Saburo killed 50 of your henchmen to get to you, the leader of the
5 Hanafuda Gang.

6 GO-KEN No, that is not true.

7 YOSHIDA Ha! I knew it! The braggart.

8 GO-KEN He killed 48 of my men.

9 YOSHIDA (AMAZED) Forty-eight!

10 GO-KEN Yeah, one man for each card in the Hanafuda card deck. That's why we are called the
11 Hanafuda Gang. Idiot.

12 YOSHIDA Hey, don't get wise with me. You have an unpleasant morning ahead of you.

13 GO-KEN I could not care less.

14 YOSHIDA You must have run pretty fast to avoid being killed by Toramon.

15 GO-KEN That's a lie! I never run. I faced Toramon and he faced me. Sword to sword. Only...

16 YOSHIDA Yes...?

17 GO-KEN Only he turned his blade over and fought me with the blunt side. He meant to capture
18 me! That insulted me! I decided to capture HIM – you know – collect my own reward
19 for him. So I turned MY blade over too...

20 YOSHIDA And???

21 GO-KEN He had anticipated that. Got me square behind the ear while I was turning my blade.
22 Lights out. Woke up in the embrace of Mistress Rope here.

23 YOSHIDA Fool! You should have killed him while you had the advantage!

24 GO-KEN You know, I never got a chance to thank him for treating me like an equal. Toramon is a
25 real samurai. Not a low born, snot nosed, piece of dirt like you.

26 YOSHIDA Why you...!

27 GO-KEN Get outta my sight and let me live in peace.

28 YOSHIDA Live, huh. Oh, you will live for a while – in hell!

1 GO-KEN I could not care less.

2 YOSHIDA You know what they are going to do to you?

3 GO-KEN I could not care less.

4 YOSHIDA They are going to use you to test a sword, that's all. They are going to attempt a very
5 special sword stroke on you. Have you ever heard of the *Sa-na-na-me*?

6 GO-KEN Sounds unpleasant.

7 YOSHIDA Very unpleasant. Very painful. Shall I show you...with my fan?

8 GO-KEN Try not to get my kimono dirty.

9 YOSHIDA You see, the blade enters here – at the left collar bone. Then slices diagonally across the
10 top of your left lung, here. Then through the breast bone, severing your windpipe – and
11 your aorta. That's when your heart explodes. But the blade continues – through your
12 right lung, your right nipple here, and out your ribcage. You'll fall apart like chopped
13 tofu.

14 GO-KEN Sounds ticklish. I'll try not to laugh.

15 YOSHIDA Wise guy! Today you will cross the Poison River and meet the King of Death. Enjoy your
16 eternity in Hades!

17 GO-KEN As long as you are not there it will seem like Paradise. Now get out of my sight.

18 YOSHIDA Worthless dog. Have a nice morning!

19 GO-KEN Hey, Lord Fan! Just tell me one thing. Is my executioner going to be Toramon Saburo?

20 YOSHIDA Huh? You'd like that wouldn't you. Last chance to spit in his face.

21 GO-KEN I mean to salute him.

22 YOSHIDA What? Well, no such luck. We samurai don't waste time chopping up dogs like you.
23 You get to die at the hands of some untouchable from the execution ground. All you are
24 good for is to see how sharp the Shogun's sword is. Usually we use dirty straw mats, but
25 they have more value than you do.

26 GO-KEN The Shogun's sword, you say? Now this is getting interesting.

27 FUKUDA Hey, Sir Yoshida! That's enough. It's almost time. Leave the man alone.

28 SFX SOUND OF WALKING ON CRUNCHY GRAVEL

29 YOSHIDA Okay, I'm leaving. I have more important duties to attend to anyway.

1 FUKUDA What were you talking to him about?

2 YOSHIDA I was just telling him his fortune.

3 FUKUDA Hey! Now look what you've done! You've upset him! He's face down in the dirt,
4 groveling!

5 YOSHIDA Guess he wasn't so tough after all.

6 FUKUDA (to GO-KEN, TENDERLY) Come on, get up. Back on your knees. Let me wipe off your
7 face. You want some water? No? Here, just sit here and try to relax – it will be over
8 soon. (to YOSHIDA, ANGRY) Hey, Yoshida, damn you! I told you I didn't want a scene!
9 Get back to your post before I report you!

10 YOSHIDA Don't panic, Fukuda. I've seen enough. (WALKING AWAY AND TALKING TO HIMSELF)
11 So the great Toramon is a common executioner now. How low the mighty have fallen,
12 ha, ha!

13 ACT II

14 SCENE SEVEN BACK TO THE TRIAL

15 NARRATOR Back at the Court of Inquires, Toramon is just about to describe the final events of that
16 fateful Friday morning. Let's listen...

17 KURODA So now we arrive at 9 am on Friday morning at the Sakura Barracks. Continue your
18 narrative from this point.

19 TORAMON Hai. From about a quarter to nine I was sitting on a stool in the courtyard, waiting for
20 the prisoner to be brought in. The sword was on my right and a bucket of water and
21 dipper was on my left. At about 5 minutes to nine Sir Fukuda brought in the prisoner,
22 who had a hood over his head. The prisoner was bound between the posts. The time
23 drum struck nine o'clock and Lord Kuroda and Lord Sendai arrived and took their seats
24 on the porch. Then his majesty arrived and was seated behind a bamboo curtain.

25 KURODA Yes, we know the seating arrangements, we were there! Cut to the... uh, I mean get to
26 the point... I mean the heart of the... oh, just continue!

27 TORAMON Hai. I removed the sword from its scabbard and wetted the blade with the water. Then
28 I approached the prisoner. I asked that the hood over his head be removed.

29 SENDAI Wait a moment, Sir Toramon. Didn't you say something to the prisoner first?

30 KURODA Yes, I remember that too. It upset his majesty to see you talking to that thing. What
31 could you possibly be discussing?

32 TORAMON Hai. I introduced myself to him...and apologized for taking his life.

1 KURODA Such courtesy... to a worthless dog!

2 TORAMON When the prisoner heard my name, his head shot up. I thought that was odd so I asked
3 to have the hood removed.

4 KURODA Which his Majesty graciously allowed. Go on.

5 TORAMON I was surprised to see that the prisoner was the brigand Go-ken.

6 KURODA You KNEW him???

7 SENDAI Sir Toramon was the man who captured Go-ken. But I was also surprised – I thought
8 Go-ken had been executed weeks ago.

9 KURODA (SARCASTICALLY) So what did you two old buddies chat about?

10 TORAMON Sir, I was never friends with this man, but I respected his skill with a sword. When I
11 removed the hood and our eyes met... it was strange. At first he looked proud, defiant...
12 but then his expression softened, and I think he even smiled.

13 KURODA Well, what did he say?

14 TORAMON That was the strange part, my lord... he never said a word. He never even opened his
15 mouth. He looked as if he wanted to say something, but couldn't.

16 KURODA Fear works in mysterious ways. He was paralyzed by fear.

17 TORAMON No, my lord. There was not a hint of fear in him. I could read his emotions as plainly as
18 if they were written on his face. First, he looked at me warmly, like a long lost brother.
19 Then he carefully eyed the gleaming sword, and his expression turned to awe and
20 respect. I believe he even nodded his approval. Then his expression changed suddenly
21 to concern - he frowned like a chess player who just realized a mistake in his play.
22 Finally his eyes met mine one last time, and all emotion vanished from his face. His eyes
23 looked into eternity. He assumed an attitude of pure calm, pure contentment, pure
24 release.He ...he...became a Buddha before my very eyes.

25 KURODA Oh, this is nonsense! I thought we chose you for your ability with a sword, not to read
26 souls like a Zen master.

27 TORAMON But he did have a soul. Just like this sword has a soul. And I could see his soul gleaming
28 as brightly as the sword. But that is not what I was thinking about at the time.

29 SENDAI What were you thinking, Saburo?

30 TORAMON A Zen master taught me a *koan*, a Zen riddle: "What do you do if you meet the Buddha
31 on the road?"

1 SENDAI Saburo! Don't!

2 TORAMON The answer is: "You kill him!" SO I KILLED HIM!

3 ACT II

4 SCENE EIGHT – THE MORNING OF THE EXECUTION, SAKURA BARRACKS

5 NARRATOR Well, that's Saburo's account of the events. But let's go back to that bloody Friday
6 morning and see for ourselves what really happened... and its aftermath. There! It's
7 Friday morning, we are at the Sakura Barracks and the time drum is about to sound the
8 hour!

9 TIME DRUM (BOOM! BOOM!)

10 CRIER Niiiiine o'clock! Hour of the Dragon! Three hours 'til noon! "Be diligent in your work!"

11 TIME DRUM (BOOM!)

12 KURODA (EXUBERANT) Good morning! Good morning! *Ohayo gozaimasu, Sendai dono!*

13 SENDAI *Ohayo gozaimasu, Kuroda dono.* It turned out to be a beautiful day, yes?

14 KURODA Yes, indeed! Very auspicious! Is everything ready? Ah, Sir Toramon! Is everything
15 ready? His majesty will be here soon!

16 TORAMON Hai! Everything is prepared, Lord Kuroda.

17 KURODA *Yokatta!* Very good! Ah, here comes his majesty now.

18 SENDAI and KURODA Welcome, your majesty!

19 KURODA (TALKING TO THE SHOGUN, WHO IS NEVER HEARD) Your majesty, please sit here for the
20 best view. Are you comfortable? Yes, yes – that is the thing that we will use to test the
21 sword. And that is Sir Toramon with the sword. He is one of your top swordsmen. Yes,
22 very well..... (TO TORAMON) Sir Toramon, his majesty commands you to proceed with
23 the sword testing!

24 TORAMON *Kashikomarimasu!* I obey!

25 SFX SOUND OF WATER POURING OVER THE BLADE. SOUND OF WALKING ON GRAVEL AS
26 TORAMON APPROACHES GO-KEN. FOOTSTEPS HALT.

27 TORAMON I am Toramon Saburo. I apologize for taking your life. ...Hmph???

28 KURODA What is going on? His majesty wants to know why you are talking to that thing.

29 TORAMON Sires, I request to remove the hood from this man.

1 KURODA Toramon, just get on with it! ... What is that your majesty? Yes, of course, at once. Sir
2 Toramon, remove the hood so that his majesty may gaze upon the face of fear and
3 terror!

4 TORAMON HAAAAI!

5 SFX HOOD REMOVED

6 TORAMON (SHOCKED) Go-Ken! ... I didn't know it was you! I am sorry to meet you like this.
7 *Gomen!* If is any consolation, I will be using this sword. It is a rare creation of the
8 legendary Tachibana of Mino. It seems that our destinies will be forever entwined with
9 this blade.

10 SENDAI (ANXIOUS) Saburo, get on with it! They are getting impatient!

11 TORAMON Hai! Farewell, Go-ken!

12 SFX SOUND OF EXECUTION.

13 SENDAI Magnificent!

14 KURODA Mikoto! Excellent! Wasn't that an excellent stroke your majesty? Your majesty? Uh,
15 attendants! His majesty has fainted from... from too much sun! Help me escort him
16 back to his quarters. There we go... Lord Sendai, thank Sir Toramon for an excellent
17 display!

18 SENDAI Yes, my lord. SFX (SENDAI GETS OFF THE PORCH AND WALKS TOWARDS TORAMON)
19 Did you hear that, Saburo? Rare praise from Lord Kuroda himself! Let me also
20 congratulate you! Excellent work. A perfect stroke! I knew you were the right man for
21 the job! (PAUSE) Is something the matter, Saburo?

22 SFX SOUND OF WATER SWISHING AROUND AS TORAMON FRANTICALLY WASHES THE
23 SWORD

24 TORAMON Something is wrong!

25 SENDAI What... what do you mean?

26 TORAMON Something is wrong! I could feel it! I hit something!

27 SENDAI Well, of course. Flesh and bone.

28 TORAMON No! This was something hard; I could feel it through the sword. ...But ...I ...don't ...see
29 ...any... Ha! Here it is! At the tip!

30 SENDAI What do you see?!?

1 TORAMON Look, right there at the tip, at the *kissaki*. A small chip! I knew I hit something hard, but
2 how...

3 SENDAI Be quiet! Ah, Sir Fukuda – your duties are finished here. Have some untouchables
4 come later and dispose of... of ... that.

5 FUKUDA Hai! *Kashikomarimasu!* (SOUND OF FUKUDA LEAVING)

6 SENDAI Saburo! Put the sword away and let me hide it back in the archives. Quick!

7 TORAMON But we must report this! The Shogun's sword!

8 SENDAI I don't think the Shogun will ever want to see or hear of that sword again! Quick, let me
9 take it before...

10 KURODA (RETURNING) Great news! The Shogun wants to see the sword!

11 SENDAI (TO TORAMON) Too late! (TO KURODA) Ah, Lord Kuroda. Yes, we were just preparing
12 the sword for his majesty's inspection. First we have to clean it of impure blood, have a
13 Shinto priest purify it (IN AN ASIDE) somehow polish out that chip - and we will be ready
14 to present it to his majesty on, say, Monday?

15 KURODA (COLDLY) His majesty wants it now, while it is still warm with human blood.

16 SENDAI I only wished not to defile...

17 KURODA Give me that sword! (LEAVING) Well done, Sir Toramon. We will discuss your reward
18 later.

19 SILENCE

20 TORAMON I am afraid I have failed you, Lord Sendai. Forgive me!

21 SENDAI It wasn't THAT big of a chip. Perhaps they won't notice.

22 TORAMON I accept full responsibility for the damage.

23 SENDAI They probably won't even take the sword all the way out of the scabbard. They will
24 never see the tip. Come on, Saburo. Let's quietly disappear...

25 SFX SOUND OF RUNNING FEET

26 KURODA TORAMON!!!!

27 ACT II

28 SCENE NINE BACK TO THE TRIAL

1 NARRATOR Back at the Court of Inquires, Toramon could be facing death if it turns out he was
2 responsible for damaging the Shogun's sword. As you know, samurai swords are very
3 strong – so how DID that chip get in the blade?

4 TORAMON Immediately after the... testing, I washed and examined the blade and discovered the
5 chip.

6 SENDAI Which Sir Toramon brought to my attention.

7 KURODA But you didn't bring it to MY attention! I had to suffer the humility of presenting his
8 majesty with a damaged sword! "He ruined my pretty sword!" were his majesty's very
9 words. I was made a laughing stock! Before the day was out the news of the chipped
10 blade had spread around the castle. Now I hear that some fool is writing a kabuki play
11 about it! How is that even possible?

12 SENDAI You know what they say about Edo Castle: it has a thousand ears and ten thousand
13 tongues.

14 KURODA Sir Toramon. Your carelessness has brought shame upon the shogun and has
15 embarrassed us samurai in front of the populace of Edo.

16 TORAMON Sir, I accept any punishment you see fit to bestow upon me.

17 KURODA The Shogun wants to cut your head off with that same sword. I am begging him for
18 leniency – to allow you to commit hara-kiri, with honor!

19 TORAMON I accept any punishment you see fit to bestow upon me.

20 KURODA Well, I see no other option but to pass sentence.

21 SENDAI But we still don't know what caused the chip in the blade. How can we conclude this
22 investigation without knowing the cause of this ... this accident?

23 KURODA Does it really matter now? Toramon has accepted responsibility. He has as much
24 confessed to negligence and incompetence. (PAUSE) Sir Toramon, it is my sad duty to
25 pronounce...

26 FUKUDA *MOSHIAGEMASU!*

27 KURODA (SPEAKING THEATRICALY) Who interrupts this court by crying "*Moshiagemasu!*"
28 Be silent!

29 FUKUDA *MOSHIAGEMASU!*

30 KURODA It is a serious breach of protocol to interrupt this court while I am passing sentence. Be
31 silent!

1 FUKUDA MOOOSHIIIIAAAGGGEMAAASUUUUU!

2 SENDAI (ANXIOUS) Lord Kuroda! I recognize this man as Sir Fukuda – who was in charge of the
3 prisoner on Friday morning. Perhaps he has some relevant information!

4 KURODA But we have HEARD all the testimony! I was about to pass sentence!

5 SENDAI Please, Lord Kuroda! Perhaps we can clear up this mystery once and for all.

6 KURODA Oh, very well. This better be important or we will have two hara-kiris today! You there,
7 approach the court and identify yourself!

8 FUKUDA (PANTING) Thank you, my lord. I was afraid I was too late. My name is Fukuda Shiro, of the
9 castle guards. I believe I have important information for this trial of Sir Toramon.

10 KURODA Well, what is it?

11 FUKUDA Hai. On Friday last I was assigned to bring a prisoner from the detention center to the
12 Sakura Barrack.

13 KURODA Yes, yes, we know that. Get on with it.

14 FUKUDA I was early, so I waited with the prisoner in the outer gardens until just before the nine
15 o'clock drum.

16 SENDAI We know that too. Please get to the relevant part.

17 FUKUDA Well, as we were waiting... a strange thing happened. Sir Yoshida, who was supposed to
18 be on duty at the Sakura Gate, approached me and asked permission to talk to the
19 prisoner.

20 KURODA What?!?

21 SENDAI Wait, is this the same Yoshida who tried to stop Sir Toramon from entering the castle?

22 FUKUDA I don't know about that, my lord. All I know is that Yoshida approached me and said
23 that Sir Toramon had asked him to check on the prisoner.

24 KURODA Is this true, Sir Toramon? Did you ask Yoshida to do this?

25 TORAMON No, my lord. I did not speak to Sir Yoshida after leaving the Sakura Gate.

26 KURODA Well, this is most peculiar. What happened next?

27 FUKUDA Hai. *Gomen*, I'm sorry – but I believed Sir Yoshida's story. I allowed him to talk to the
28 prisoner for about 5 minutes.

29 SENDAI What on earth did they talk about?

1 FUKUDA I don't know, my lord. But at one point I saw Sir Yoshida dragging his fan across the
2 prisoner's body ... like this.

3 KURODA That's ... that's the *sananame* cut!

4 FUKUDA Hai. I was afraid that Sir Yoshida was taunting the prisoner, so I came over to them. The
5 prisoner seemed alright, but as soon as I turned my back...

6 SENDAI Yes, what happened!

7 FUKUDA Well, I looked back and the prisoner was face down on the ground. It looked he was
8 trying to bury himself headfirst into the gravel.

9 KURODA Was he trying to dig his way out?

10 FUKUDA I didn't know what to think, sire. I got him back on his knees, cleaned him up and then...
11 well, then he just sat there tight lipped as if nothing had happened.

12 SILENCE

13 KURODA This is all very strange, and we will corroborate your story with Sir Yoshida later, but it
14 has no bearing on the performance of Sir Toramon.

15 FUKUDA Please, sir, I was just getting to that!

16 KURODA Well, then get to it!

17 FUKUDA Hai. Well, it's like this. Later on Friday I had sent some untouchables up to cut down
18 the, uh, prisoner and dispose of him. Then today, one of these guys – the untouchables
19 – walks up to me and says, "Hey, you samurai too cheap to feed your prisoners gruel?
20 You got to feed them rocks now?"

21 SENDAI & KURODA What?!?

22 FUKUDA I nearly took his head off for insolence, but then he thrust out his hand full of ... bloody
23 gravel.

24 KURODA What is going on here?!?

25 FUKUDA I said, "Where did that come from?" and he says "Outta the prisoner's gullet, where do
26 ya think?" And I was about to chop him, when I remembered Yoshida... and the
27 prisoner... and the garden... and the gravel.

28 SENDAI Are you saying...that they found gravel from the garden...in the prisoner's throat?

29 FUKUDA I think so, sir! If I may – here is some gravel from the garden. And here is the gravel
30 from the gullet, uh, sorry, I mean the prisoner. I cleaned it up for you.

1 SENDAI Amazing! It is the same gravel!

2 KURODA Unbelievable!

3 FUKUDA And look here, sir! This one has a big gash on it, as if made by a ...

4 SENDAI A sword!

5 KURODA Yes, I see it.

6 FUKUDA So, well, I think I know what happened...sir.

7 SENDAI Tell us your conjecture, Sir Fukuda.

8 FUKUDA My con-jek?...Uh, well, what I think happened is that Sir Yoshida told the prisoner, Go-
9 ken, he was going to be cut with the sananame stroke. That was the funny business
10 with the fan. And maybe he also told him they were going to use a valuable sword to do
11 it. So Go-ken, to get in one last jab ...

12 SENDAI ...Buried his face in the ground so as to swallow the gravel...

13 KURODA ...That would chip the blade as it passed through his body.

14 PAUSE

15 FUKUDA Yes, sir. That was my con-jek...sure, too...sir.

16 SENDAI Sir Toramon, what do you make of all this?

17 TORAMON Hai. I was responsible for the safety of the sword. It was damaged in my keeping. I still
18 assume blame for the damage and will accept any punishment ...

19 KURODA Yes, yes, yes, any punishment I deem fit and whatever. Don't push me, Toramon! It
20 would be the easiest thing right now to blame you, sentence you to death and then go
21 have dinner. ...But I am inclined to believe you are not entirely at fault. If someone
22 interfered...

23 SENDAI Sabotage?

24 KURODA Yes, something like that. And this Yoshida character seems to have had it in for you all
25 day. Delaying you at the gate, stuffing your prisoner with rocks. Is there some bad
26 blood between you two?

27 TORAMON I barely know the man, sir. I certainly have nothing against him.

28 KURODA Well, he has a lot to answer for. Guards! Bring Sir Yoshida to this court immediately!
29 We may still get out of here before evening.

- 1 SENDAI Any further questions for Sir Fukuda, my lord?
- 2 KURODA What? Ah, no. Thank you, Sir Fukuda. You have been very helpful to this inquiry. Now,
3 if could kindly remove these, uh, these rocks.
- 4 FUKUDA Yes, sir. Let me gather that up for you.
- 5 TORAMON Sir Fukuda, may I please have the one with the gash.
- 6 FUKUDA Here ya go. Good luck, Saburo! I will return to my post now, sirs.
- 7 SENDAI Thank you for your diligent work!
- 8 KURODA Well, Sir Toramon – Saburo – once we hear from Yoshida I think we can neatly wrap this
9 up.
- 10 GUARD *Moshiagemasu!* Guard reporting Sir Yoshida did not come to the castle today!
- 11 SENDAI What, is he sick? On leave?
- 12 GUARD No, sir. He left no information on his whereabouts.
- 13 KURODA That is a punishable offense in itself. Send guards to his residence and drag him here
14 under arrest.
- 15 GUARD *Kashikomarimasu!*
- 16 KURODA (TIRED) Chipped swords...bloody rocks... kabuki plays! It's been a long afternoon,
17 gentlemen. I REALLY don't want to drag this out any longer. Lord Sendai, how if we
18 settle it like this:
- 19 KURODA & SENDAI MUMBLE TO EACH OTHER
- 20 KURODA Agreed?
- 21 SENDAI Agreed, my lord.
- 22 KURODA Sir Toramon, face the court and prepare to receive our judgment.
- 23 TORAMON HAAAAAA!
- 24 KURODA It is the opinion of this court that you were hindered in carrying out your duties by one
25 Yoshida. He will be dealt with severely... when we get a hold of him. However, the fact
26 remains that the sword was in your care when it was damaged. We must therefore
27 assign a punishment for your carelessness.
- 28 TORAMON HAAAAAA!

1 KURODA You are hereby suspended from duties at the castle – without pay – until further notice.
2 Beginning today.

3 TORAMON HAAAAAA!

4 SENDAI Best to lie low for a while, Saburo, until this matter is forgotten.

5 KURODA There! So much for the punishment. Looks like you get to keep your head and your
6 stomach today, eh, Toramon?

7 TORAMON My humble thanks, lord, but...

8 KURODA Shut up! Your tongue has a way of tying knots around your neck! Next, we must
9 address the matter of your compensation.

10 TORAMON Compensation, my lord?

11 KURODA Of course! You performed your duties as instructed, and you gave our young Shogun
12 quite a show – one I don't think he will forget for a while. And just between us – it was
13 a magnificent display of swordsmanship.

14 SENDAI Perfect – except for that accident.

15 KURODA Yes, well. So in compensation for your skill...

16 TORAMON My lord! Please! I have all the compensation I need.

17 SENDAI What?

18 KURODA What are you talking about?

19 TORAMON This piece of gravel – the rock with the gash in it – is more than adequate for my poor
20 performance.

21 SENDAI Saburo!

22 KURODA No, Sir Toramon. You won't get off that easy. I have a much better punishment... I
23 mean *reward* for you. We present you with the Chipped Blade.

24 TORAMON Sire! The *Inabakari* Sword?

25 KURODA We will never use that name again. That sword was lost hundreds of years ago,
26 probably when Osaka Castle burned down. Isn't that right, Lord Sendai?

27 SENDAI I'm afraid so. It seems like my records were incorrect. My apologies for all the fuss.

28 KURODA No, this is a worthless sword we are giving you, Toramon. As you said yourself, a "value-
29 less" sword. Ha, ha, ha!

1 TORAMON I'd rather just have the rock, sire.

2 KURODA Toramon Saburo! Take this sword and get out of Edo Castle... and out of my sight! Case
3 is closed!

4 ALL HAAAAAAAAA!

5

6 ACT III

7 SCENE ONE – YOSHIWARA PLEASURE DISTRICT

8 NARRATOR Yes, it looks like our hero gets to keep his head for today. But what about the man who
9 caused all this ruckus, what about Yoshida? He seems to very popular lately, with many
10 people trying to find him. I wonder where he could have gone?...

11 CRIER (BANGING GONG) Yoshiwara is open! Yoshiwara is noooow open!

12 CROWDS SOUNDS, SHUFFLING FEET GREETINGS. THROUGH IT THE SOUND OF RUNNING FEET.
13 RUNNING STOPS. POUNDING ON DOOR.

14 MASTER Coming, coming. You must be eager. (DOOR OPENS). Why, Sir Yoshida! What a
15 pleasant surprise. Thank you for patronizing our establi....

16 YOSHIDA No time for formalities! I need a room, for ... for a few days!

17 MASTER Why, certainly, sir. You are our first customer today, so take your pick of any room.

18 YOSHIDA One in the back. Far from the entrance.

19 MASTER Let me think... I believe room 14 will suit your needs. In the back, overlooking the canal,
20 very private. Shall I escort you there, sir?

21 YOSHIDA Yes, hurry! And don't call me sir! In fact, don't call me Yoshida! I am , uh, Mr. Hori, got
22 it? No one named Yoshida ever came here, understand?

23 MASTER *Mochiron*, of course, Mr. Hori. Ah, here is room 14. I am sure you will be comfortable
24 here. How long did you say you wished to stay?

25 YOSHIDA At least a week.

26 MASTER Hm, well, for long term stays we do expect...

27 YOSHIDA Yeah, yeah – pay up front. COINS JINGLE. This enough?

28 MASTER Thank you, sir! Sorry, I mean Hori-san. Shall I send some ladies in to entertain you?

1 YOSHIDA No. Just send some sake. And some dinner later. And remember – Yoshida was never
2 here!

3 MASTER Never heard of him. Have a pleasant stay, Hori-san.

4 DOOR SLAMS. FOOTSTEPS DOWN CORRIDOR. GENTLE TAPPING ON SCREEN DOOR.

5 MASTER *Gomen kudasai.* Excuse my interruption.

6 BRIGAND 1 Yeah, come in.

7 DOOR SLIDES OPEN

8 MASTER He's in room 14. In the back.

9 BRIGAND 1 Any exits?

10 MASTER Not unless he wants to jump in the canal.

11 BRIGAND 1 Just in case. Tori, you go outside around back.

12 BRIGAND 2 (TORI) Ho!

13 BRIGAND 1 Inu, Hebi – you come with me.

14 BRIGANDS 2&3 (INU, HEBI) Ho!

15 BRIGAND 1 (TO MASTER) Ah, things may get a little... messy back there. You may have to change the
16 tatami mats.

17 BRIGAND 2 And the shoji doors.

18 BRIGAND 3 And the walls and ceiling.

19 BRIGAND 1 JINGLING COINS. Will this suffice?

20 MASTER Please, this one is on the house! Consider it paid in advance. Go-Ken was one of our
21 greatest patrons. Friends of his are always welcome here for any... entertainment...
22 they desire.

23 BRIGAND 1 *Domo.* Thanks, then. On Go-Ken's behalf. In the back you say?

24 MASTER *Hai.* Down the hall, turn left, last room. Go right in... he is expecting you.

25 BRIGANDS *Abayo!* (JAPANESE SLANG: "See ya")

26 SFX STOMPING FEET FADE AWAY

1 NARRATOR Later that week the people of Edo saw a strange sight. As the sun pierced the mist of
2 dawn it revealed a human head in front of the Sakura Gate of Edo Castle. The head was
3 perched on a mound of white gravel, and a folded fan was stuffed in its mouth.

4 ACT III

5 SCENE TWO ENTRANCE TO KABUKI THEATER

6 NARRATOR Before we leave our story, let's check in one last time on our struggling artists Uchida
7 and Kinsai. A month has passed since Toramon's trial. Kinsai has finally finished writing
8 a kabuki play and it looks like it might be a hit. He says the play is based on "recent
9 events", but of course he had to change the names to protect...himself. Ah, here we are
10 – the crowded kabuki theater district of old Edo.

11 CRIER (BANGING STICKS) Kaaabuki today! Kaaabuki today!

12 Hey, young man, don't run away. Come and see kabuki today!

13 CUSTOMER I'll take two for the morning show.

14 KINSAI Here you go, sir!

15 CRIER Go for one show – you'll stay for all day. Not even a sumo wrestler can tear you away!

16 CUSTOMER Oh, alright – give me a full day ticket. And a seat by the *hanamichi*.

17 KINSAI With pleasure. Please follow our usher.

18 CRIER Come one and all! Big and small! We gotta fill this kabuki hall!

19 UCHIDA Hey, Kinchan! How are the ticket sales?

20 KINSAI Great! Almost sold out for the morning and afternoon, and the play hasn't even opened
21 yet!

22 UCHIDA It's my posters that are drawing them in. Hey, I'm going to set up over here to sell my
23 *ukiyoo* prints.

24 KINSAI Whatever. Here you go sir, please follow the usher. Hey, Crier! Tell them about the
25 play!

26 CRIER Let's see...

27 Today's show, in case you don't know, opens with a duel on the *Tookai Do*.

28 Sir Torayama, with a sword in each hand, fights Goemon and his fearsome band.

29 In the afternoon, when things get hot, the cold-blooded Yoshitsu enters the plot.

1 A mystic sword comes into play, to usher Goemon on his way.
2 But, wait, the sword is not the same! And Torayama has to take the blame.
3 Tonight's climax is one to behold. Buy a ticket now, before they're all sold!
4 The ending I won't reveal – *you'll* have to see it played.
5 So line up now for the Saga of the Chipped Blade!

6 CROWD (APPLAUSE) Well done! Good show! *Mikoto!*

7 KINSAI Don't forget the author!

8 CRIER Written by Chiemon Kansai.

9 KINSAI Hey! That's the wrong name! I'm... wait...(TO TICKET BUYERS) uh, ...Thank you...Thank
10 you!

11 CROWD Two tickets – all day.
12 Morning show – three tickets.
13 All day – four tickets, and lunch and dinner.

14 KINSAI Hai. Hai. Thank you. Here's your change. Please follow the usher.

15 UCHIDA Posters for sale! Posters of the stars of the show. Here is Ichikawa Danju as Torayama!
16 And here is Kinotsuke as the brave Goemon.

17 ORIN Uchida-kun! There you are!

18 UCHIDA Ah, the lovely Lady Orin! Thank you for coming today.

19 ORIN The master is treating all the girls to kabuki. Business has never been better since your
20 play was announced. Is this a picture of me?

21 UCHIDA Uh, no. That's Mr. Nakamura. He plays the courtesan Orei. Here is your *u-ki-yoo-e*.

22 ORIN Oh, no! That's the drawing you made of me with my pipe!

23 UCHIDA Please, take one. My gift to you for all your gifts to me.

24 ORIN Awwww!

25 KINSAI Look at that – we sold out on the first day! I'll finally be able to move away from that
26 nosey old woman! Come on every one, let's go in and see my masterpiece! ... Hey,
27 you there! Sir Samurai! Would you like a free ticket? I can squeeze you in the back.

1 NARRATOR But the silent figure standing across the road never said a word. A large bamboo hat
2 shaded his face. His fingers slowly rubbed a smooth white stone with a strange gash in
3 it, as someone would caress a rosary. And an ancient looking sword hung at his side. An
4 expensive looking sword. But really the sword was value...less. Except for the souls that
5 were now entwined in its lightening pattern chipped blade.

6 PAUSE

7 NARRATOR We hope you enjoyed our humble play. Thank you all for listening. *Minna sama,*
8 *arigatoogozaimashita! Sayoonara!*

9 THE END